THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

By O. Henry

communities; therefore, and for and leaned against a rock. stables and maybe, some lackadaisi- you was afraid he'd do it. And he rental affection, but we're dealing no response. cal bloodhounds and a diatribe or would, too, if he could find a match. with humans, and it ain't human for So I lighted my pipe and sat down

get." So, it looked good.

One evening after sundown, we trove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the op-"Hey, little boy!" says Bill,

"would you like to have a bag, of candy and a nice ride?" The boy catches Bill neatly in the

eye with a piece of brick?" That will cost the old man an extra \$500," says Bill, climbing over

That boy puts up a fight like a get up and cook breakfast, while I last, we got him down in the bottom and reconnoiter." of the buggy and drove away. We I went up on the peak of the little

"We're playing Indian. We're mak- wolves!" says I, and I went down the ing Buffalo Bill's show look like mountain to breakfast.

having the time of his life. The down my back," explained Bill, and fun of camping out in a cave had then mashed it in with his foot; and made him forget that he was a cap- I boxed his ears. Have you got a tive himself. He immediately chris- gun about you, Sam?" tened me Snake-eye, the Spy, and I took the rock away from the announced that when his braves re- boy and kind of patched up the arbe broiled at the stake at the rising to Bill. "No man ever yet struck the

Then we had supper; and he hiled it. You better beware." his mouth full of bacon and bread After breakfast the kid takes a and gravy, and began to talk. He piece of leather with strings wrap-

"I like this fine. I never camped "What's he up to now?" says Bill out before; but I had a pet 'possom anxiously. "You don't think he'll once, and I was nine last birthday. I run away, do you, Sam?" hate to go to school. Rats ate up "No fear of it, says I. "He don't 16 of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled seem to be much of a home body. hen's eggs. Are there any real In- But we've got to fix up some plan dians in the woods? I want some about the ransom. There don't seem more gravy. Does the trees moving to be much excitement around Summake the wind blow We had fly mit on account of his disappearance; pupples. What makes your nose so but maybe they haven't realized yet red, Hank? My father has lots of that he's gone. His folks may think money. Are the stars hot? I whip- he's spending the night with Aunt ped Ed Walker twice, Saturday. I Jane or one of the neighbors. Anydon't like girls. You dassent catch how, he'll be missed today. Tonight

toads unless with a string. Do oxen we must get a message to his father make any noise? Why are oranges demanding the \$2,000 for his reround? Have you got beds to sleep turn." on in this cave? Amos Murray has Just then we heard a kind of wargot six toes. A parret can talk, but whoop, such as David might have a monkey or a fish can't. How many emitted when he knocked out the does it take to make 12?"

member that he was a pesky redskin, pocket, and he wes whirling it and pick up his stick rifle and tiptoe around his head. to the mouth of the cave to rubber | I dodged, and heard a heavy thud for the scouts of the hated paleface, and a kind of a sigh from Bill like a Now and then he would let out a horse gives out when you take his war-whoep that made Old Hank the saddle off. A niggerhead rock the Trapper shiver. That boy had Bill size of an egg had caught Bill just

"Red Chief," says I to the kid, himself all over and fell in the fire "Aw, what for?" says he. "I don't for washing the dishes. I dragged have any fun at home. I hate to go him out and poured cold water on to school. I like to camp out. You his head for half an hour. won't take me back home again. By and by, Bill sits up and feels

stay here in the cave a while."

"All right!" says be. "That'll be "Take it easy," says I, "You'll fine. I never had such fun in my come to your senses presently."

We went to bed about 11 o'clock. go away and leave me here alone, We spread down some wide blankets will you, Sam?" and quiits and put Red Chief be- I went out and caught that boy tween us. We weren't afraid he'd and shook him until his freckles run away. He kept us awake for rattled. three hours, jumping up and reach- "If you don't behave," says I, "I'll ing for his rifle and screeching; take you straight home. Now, are "Hist! pard," in mine and Bill's ears, you going to be good or not?" as the fancied crackle of a twig or "I was only funning," says he sulthe rustle of a leaf revealed to his lenly. "I didn't mean to hurt Old young imagination the stealthy ap- Hank. But what did he hit me for? proach of the outlaw band. At last, I'll behave, Snake-eye, if you won't I fell into a troubled sleep, and send me home, and if you'll let me dreamed that I had been kidnapped play the Black Scout today." and chained to a tree by a feroclous "I don't know the game," says I

by a series of awful screams from day. I'm going away for a while, on Bill. They weren't yells, or howls, business. Now, you come in and or shouts, or whoops, or yawps, such make friends with him and say you as you'de expect from a manly set of are sorry for hurting him, or home vocal organs-they were simply in- you go, at once." decent, terrifying and humiliating I made him and Bill shake hands, pereams, such as women emit when and then I took Bill aside and told they see ghosts or caterpillars. It's him I was going to Poplar Cove, a an awful thing to hear a strong, little village three miles from the desperate, fat man scream incontin- | cave, and find out what I could about ently in a cave at day break.

truck us. It was, as Bill afterward ing bacon; and he was industriously should be paid.

flat as a flannel-cake, and called I got the knife away from the kid police raids, train robberies and cy- and warm you good." Summit, of course. It contained in- and made him lie down again. But, clones. I never lost my nerve yet I walked over to Poplar Cove and cates the pasteboard box at the foot habitants of as undeleterious and from that moment, Bill's spirit was till we kidnapped that two-legged sat around the postoffice and store, of the fence-post, slips a folded piece juries, suffered a year ago. Morris self-satisfied a class of peasantry as broken. He laid down on his side of skyrocket of a kid. He's got me go- talking with the chawbacons that of paper into it and pedals away and his friends say he was "mira- But Not ever clustered around a Maypoie. | the bed, but he never closed an eye ing. You won't leave me long with come in to trade. One whiskerando again back toward Summit. Bill and me had a joint capital of again in eleep as long as that boy him, will you, Sam?" about \$600, and we needed just was with us. I dozed off for a while, "I'll be back some time this after- set on account of Elder Ebenezer cluded the thing was square. I slid \$2,000 more to pull off a fraudulent but along toward sun-up I remem\$2,000 more to pull off a fraudulent but along toward sun-up I rememstolen. That was all I wanted to town-lot scheme in western Illinois bered that Red Chief had said I was boy amused and quiet till I return. stolen. That was all I wanted to with. We talked it over on the front to be burned at the stake at the ris- and now we'll write the letter to old know. I bought some smoking to- woods, and was back at the cave in all disjointed and twisted horribly. steps of the hotel. Philoprogenitive- ing of the sun. I wasn't nervous or Dorset." ness says we, is strong in semi-rural afraid; but I sat up and lit my pipe Bill and I got paper and pencil of black-eyed peas, posted my letter

anybody will pay out money to get a 40-pound chunk of freckled wildcat | ments.

named Ebenezer Dorset. The father that is just the kind that parents ence up to me."



"I'm the Black Scout," says Red Chief.

took him up to the cave, and I hitch- mountain and ran my eye over the ed, he will be returned to you safe green. I tell you, Sam, a human can Just at the moment when I should ed the horses in the cedar brake. continguous vicinity. Over toward and well within three hours. These only stand so much. I takes him by have been abstracting the \$1,500 After dark I drove the buggy to the Summit I expected to see the sturdy terms are final and if you don't accede the neck of his clothes and drags from the box under the tree, accordlittle village, three miles away, where yeomanry of the village armed with to them no further communication him down the mountain. On the ing to the original proposition, Bill I had hired it, and walked back to scythes and pitchforks beating the countryside for the dastardly kid-Bill was pasting court-plaster over nappers, But what I saw was a I addressed this letter to Dorset, to have two or three bites on my When the kid found out we were the scratches and bruises on his fea- peaceful landscape dotted with one and put it in my pocket. As I was thumb and hand cauterized. tures. There was a fire burning be- man ploughing with a dun mule. No- about to start, the kid comes up to "But he's gone"—continued Bill ed up a howl like a calliope and fashind the big rock at the entrance of body was dragging the creek; no me and says: mard tail-feathers stuck in his red distracted parents. There was a sylpervading that section of the ex- Bill will play with you. What kind Driscoll to the madhouse." "Ha! cursed paleface, do you dare ternal outward surface of Alabama to enter the camp of Red Chief, the that lay exposed to my view, "Per-"He's all right now." says Bill, yet been discovered that the wolves rolling up his trousers and examin- have borne away the tender lambkin the Indians are coming. I'm tired "Bill," says I, "there isn't any utes I shall cross the central, southing some bruises on his shins. from the fold, Heaven help the

magic-lantern views of Palestine in When I got to the cave I found the town hall. I'm Old Hank, the Bill backed up against the side of it, help you foil the pesky savages." Teapper, Red Chief's captive, and breathing bard, and the boy threathe scalped at daybreak. By ening to smash him with a rock half looking at the kid suspiciously.

Yes, sir, that boy seemed to be "He put a red-hot boiled potato

turned from the warpath, I was to gument. "I'll fix you," says the kid

Red Chief but what he got paid for

champlon Golith. It was a sling Every few minutes he would re- that Red Chief had pulled out of his

behind his left ear. He loosened across the frying pan of hot water

behind his ear and says: "Sam, do "Not right away," says I. "We'll you know who my favorite Biblical

"King Herod," says he. "You won't

"That's for you and Mr. Bill to de-

how the kidnapping had been re-

It looked like a good thing; but! I jumped up to see what the mat- | garded | self to get there on time. Whoa, all sides. If a gang of constables Kenosha Skeptical of wait till I tell you. We were down ter was. Red Chief was sitting on it best to send a peremptory letter to now." south, in Alabama-Bill Driscoll and Bill's hair. In his hand he had the old man Dorset that day, demanding The Black Scout jumps on Bill's come for the note they could see

around him, strutted up and down, would come by in an hour to take substance of it was this: adius of newspapers that send re- "Me?" say I. "Oh, I got a kind of guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill the mail on to Summit.

place far from Summit. It is useless stopped about eight feet behind him. fully, for you or the most skillful detec- "Sam," says Bill, "I suppose you'll the right-hand side. At the bottom limit." of the fence-post, opposite the third | "What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks got on my nerves too. We'll take trees, will be found a small paste- him.

be the Black Scout."

harmless to me. I guess Mr. Bill will except malaria and accidents. Why?"

Scout. "Get down on your hands plump on the ground and begins to and knees. How can I ride to the pluck aimlessly at grass and little

ed," said I "till we get the scheme that my scheme was to put the and a look comes in his eye like a be off with it by midnight if old rabbit's when you catch it in a trap. Dorset fell in with our proposition.

made a during-dinner speech some- ped around it out of his pocket and Scout. "Anl you have to hump your- he felt a little better. "Ninety miles," says the Black Japanese war with him as soon as

myself-when this kidnapping idea sharp case-knife we used for slic- the ransom and dictating how it back and digs his heels in his side. him a long was off crossing the pressed it, "during a moment of and realistically trying to take Bill's "You know, Sam," says Bill, "hurry back, Sam, as soon as you At 8:30 I was up in that tree as well appearst mental apparation:" but scalp, according to the sentence that I've stood by you without batting an can. I wish we hadn't made the hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the citizenry of this city is divided into had been pronounced upon him the eye in earthquakes, fire and flood- ransome more than a thousand. Say, messenger to arrive, in poker games, dynamite outrages, you quit kicking me or I'll get up | Exactly on time, a half-grown boy recovery of Andrew Morris, a Rus-

and worked on the letter while Red surreptitiously and came away. The it to Bill. It was written with a pen communities; therefore, and for and lost was written with a blanket wrapped postmaster said the mail-carrier in a crabbed hand, and the sum and Morris to pray in English. Morris

sorters out in plain clothes to stir a pain in my shoulder. I thought begged me tearfully to make the When I got back to the cave Bill ransom \$1,500 instead of \$2,000, "I and the boy were not to be found. I that Summit couldn't get after us "You're a llar!" says Bill. "You're ain't attempting," says he, "to decry explored the vicinity of the cave, and ter today by post, in regard to the several days without success. with anything stronger than con- afraid to be burned at sunrise, and the celebrated moral aspect of pa- risked a yodel or two, but there was ransom you ask for the return of Then came a day when he pray-

we collaborated a letter that ran uing softly like a scout, with a We have your boy concealed in a with a red handkerchief. The kid

tives to attempt to find him. Abso-|think I'm a renegrade, but I| lutely, the only terms on which you couldn't help it. I'm a grown person I; "of all the impudent-" can have him restored to you are with masculine proclivities and But I glanced at Bill, and hest- may be necessary to spot with glythese: We demand \$1,500 in large habits of self-defense, but there is a tated. He had the most appealing cerin, especially on silks or materials bills for his return; the money to be time when all systems of egotism look in his eyes I ever saw on the of a close weave. left at midnight tonight at the same and predominance fail. The boy is face of a dumb or a talking brute. spot and in the same box as your gone. I have sent him home. All is "Sam," says he, "what's \$250, after reply as hereinafter described. If off. There was martyrs in old all? We've got the money. One sale of cigarets is barred in Utah. you agree to these terms send your times," goes on Bill, "that suffered more night of this kid will send me answer in writing by a solitary mes- death rather than give up the par- to bed in bediam. Besides, being a senger tonight at 8:30 o'clock. After ticular graft they enjoyed. None of thorough gentleman, I think Mr. crossing Owl creek, on the road to em ever was subjugated to such su- Dorset is a spendthrift for making Poplar Cove, there are three large pernatural tortures as I have been. I us such a liberal offer. You ain't trees about 100 yards apart, close tried to be faithful to our articles going to let the chance go, are you?" to the fence of the wheat field on of depredation; but there came a "Tell you the truth, Bill." says I,

"I was rode," says Bill, "the 90 make our get-away," The messenger will place the an- miles to the stockade, not barring an We took him home that night. We swer in this box and return imme- inch. Then, when the settlers was got him to go by telling him that his If you attempt any treachery or ain't a palatable substitute. And rifle and a pair of moccasins for fail to comply with our demand as then, for an hour I had to try to ex- him, and we were going to hunt welterweight cinnamon bear; but, at go upon the top of this mountain stated, you will never see your boy plain to him why there was nothin' bears the next day. in holes, how a road can run both It was just 12 o'clock when we If you pay the money as demand- ways and what makes the grass knocked at Ebenezer's front door. TWO DESPERATE MEN. from the knees down; and I've got hand.

the cave, and the boy was watching a couriers dashed hither and you, "Aw, Snake-eye, you said I could road to Summit and kicked him Bill's leg. His father peeled him pot of boiling coffee, with two buz- bringing tidings of no news to the play the Black Scout while you was about eight feet nearer there at one away gradually, like a porous plaskick. I'm sorry we lose the ran- ter. "Play it, of course," says I. "Mr. som; but it was either that or Bill "How long can you hold him?

Bill is puffing and blowing, but "I'm the Black Scout," says Red there is a look of ineffable peace and says old Dorset, "but I think I can haps," says I to myself, "it has not Chief, "and I have to ride to ne growing content on his rose-pink promise you 10 minutes.

of playing Indian myself. I want to heart disease in your family, is ern and middle western state, and be "All right," says I. "It sounds "No," says Bill, "nothing chronic

"What am I to do?" asks Bill, says I, "and have a look behind you." "You are the hoss," says Black loses his complexion and sits down sticks. For an hour I was afraid "You'd better keep him interest- of his mind. And then I told him whole job through immediately and Bill gets down on his all fours, that we would get the ransom and "How far is it to the stockade, So Bill braced up enough to give the kld?" he asks, in a husky manner of kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a

ransom without danger of being ian border." caught by counterplots that ought to And, as dark at it was, and as fat nappers. The tree under which the I am, he was a good mile and a half "For heaven's sake," says Bill, fields or in the road. But no, siree!

rides up he road on a bicycle, lo- sian religionist, from crippling in-

another half an hour. I opened the He had bee crushed in a Kenosha Two Desperate Men.

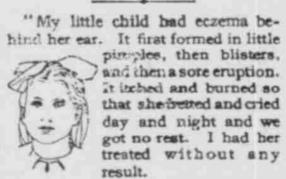
in your demands, and I hereby make had had a vision the night before. two in the "Weekly Farmers' Bud- Ain't it awful, Sam? Do you think anybody to give up \$2,000 for that on a mossy bank to await develop- you a counter-proposition, which I Fifteen minutes of monotonous We selected for our victim the little imp like that back home?" I'm willing to take a chance at In about half an hour I heard the cept. You bring Johnny home and Convulsions seized him. He writhed only child of a prominent citizen "Sure," says I. "A rowdy kind like \$1,500. You can charge the differ- bushes rustle, and Bill wabbled out pay me \$250 dollars in cash, and I on the floor. Ten minutes later he into the little glade in front of the agree to take him off your hands arose and walked-without crutchwas respectable and tight, a mort- dote on. Now, you and the Chief So, to relieve Bill, I acceded, and cave. Behind him was the kid, step. You had better come at night, for es. broad grin on his face. Bill stopped, I couldn't be responsible for what friends. they would do to anybody they saw

rescued, I was given cats. Sand father had bought a silver-mounted

way he kicks my legs black-and-blue was counting out \$250 into Dorset's

-"gone home. I showed him the tened himself as tight as a leech to

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ligation.

I had a scheme for collecting that legging it trippingly for the Canad-

commend itself to professional kid- as Bill was, and as good a runner as

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KENOSHA, Wis., June 11 .- The two camps over the remarkable culously healed" through the "faith

Moriss prayed in Russian hour

learned the tongue-enough to repeat three or four prayers. Back Gentlemen: -- I received your let- he went to the mission. He prayed

my son. I think you are a little high ed with a new hope in his voice. He am inclined to believe you will ac- drooning-then Morris collapsed,

the neighbors believe he is lost, and | This is the story of Morris and his

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says move candy stains. If there is

nappers. The tree under which the answer was to be left—and the out of Summit before I could catch up with him. Tomorrow is a Good Day

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